



# NEWS RELEASE

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## RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND CITY OF LABELLE CELEBRATE EARTH DAY

LaBelle, FL, April 22, 2004 — Today, USDA Rural Development and the City of LaBelle joined forces by celebrating Earth Day. Today's celebration reinforces the partnership and commitment between the City of LaBelle and Rural Development in improving the quality of life and health of area residents while protecting the environment as well. United States Department of Agriculture officials will be participating in events across the country to celebrate the 34th Annual Earth Day. Attending the City of LaBelle's celebration is Rural Utilities Service Administrator Hilda G. Legg.

Rural Development is working with communities across America to build and improve rural water and sewage systems and rural communities will benefit through cleaner water, recreation and wildlife resources. The community of LaBelle has long been in need of a water treatment plant to replace individual septic tanks which were posing public health threats. Rural Development and the State of Florida assisted the City of LaBelle by purchasing and constructing an effluent disposal site, effluent force main, pump station, and a 0.75 mgd wastewater treatment plant that was completed in October 2003. Phase 2 of the project includes the installation of gravity collection lines and pump station systems to take individual septic tank systems offline. Rural Development provided \$4,672,400 in Phase 1 funding along with \$1,000,000 from the State of Florida. Phase 2 funding will require \$2,232,000 in Rural Development assistance, along with \$1,000,000 from the State of Florida.

USDA Rural Development is committed to the future of rural communities, and today, both residents and the environment will benefit from continued efforts to be good stewards of the land and the environment. Rural Development is the lead Federal entity for rural development needs and administers financial and technical assistance through Rural Housing Programs, Rural Business-Cooperative Programs and Rural Utilities Programs. Further information on USDA Rural Development can be obtained by contacting any USDA Service Center or by visiting USDA's web site at <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/fl>

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